9. Temporal Rhythm of Change in Village Jhokwala, Pakistan: Ethnographic Insights from Calendars

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Calendars, Culture, and Environment.

Time is perceived through movements of objects in sky, seasonal cycles, and biological changes, which appear to be universal and every society makes their sense. Studying change in the temporal models therefore provides understanding about cultural change in a broader context (Geertz, 1966: 389-409). Temporal organization represents the relationship between culture and ecology through different informal and formal markers in the same way as space is linked with the environment (Engel-Frisch, 1943). Calendars are one of the temporal markers, which represent the people's association with and understanding of their environment both in ecological and astronomical sense. These also explain the cultural dynamics involving social and technological change because of their association with social, economic and biological rhythms of the people representing time as a resource as well as an identity (Rappaport, 1999: 190-193). The broader experience of temporality and temporal relationships, of course, cannot be reduced to clocks and calendars independent of any context or, in other words, spatial frame of reference (Adam, 1994; Munn, 1992). Therefore, radiality including both temporal and spatial aspects of culture provides a better explanation of temporal relationships beyond just movement and change (Bennardo, 2009: 198-203). The local context of the global temporality can provide insight into temporality through adoption of different calendars or changing the contextual use of the existing calendars (Holtzman, 2004; Burman, 1981).

This paper tries to explain the use of multiple calendars by farmers into a broader context of social change in a Pakistani village. A luni-solar calendar, namely Bikrami, based on local ecological and astronomical knowledge has been used over centuries in the Subcontinent with different regional variations. The solar component makes it easier to work through these calendars for agricultural purposes by marking the seasonal cycles. It was used to manage the social, religious and agricultural activities mainly in Hinduism. After the advent of Islam in the eighth century C.E. (Jaffrelot, 2004), the Islamic Hijri calendar was brought into use by Muslims mainly in the areas now included in Pakistan to regulate the religious activities. Bikrami calendar, however, remained in use for agrarian purposes as the indigenous knowledge about seasons and ecology was linked with this calendar. During the British Colonial period, Gregorian calendar was introduced and was adopted for official purposes in Pakistan after 1947, which was initially adopted in the cities. Due to contact with cities and a shift from seasonal agrarian economy to the market economy, the use of Gregorian calendar in the villages has been ever increasing. This changing use of different calendars tells the story of social change and people's vision for development.

The field work for this ethnographic study of time and space was carried out through 2010 in Jhokwala Village, Lodhran District, Pakistan. The total area of the village is not more than two square miles, including the settlement and agricultural fields, and a population of approximately 1,200. It is an agricultural area famous for its cotton crop and mango production in the country. The village is located not far from the highway between the two major urban cities of the South Punjab, namely Multan and Bahawalpur. Muslim Rajputs from Haryana

region of India migrated to this area and Hindus of this area left for India as part of the Great Partition in 1947. Haryana has been part of the Greater Punjab in history and the people migrating to this village also belonged to agricultural professions (Singh and Thandi, 1996: 361). Therefore, the local Saraiki and the migrating Rajput populations share a lot of cultural similarities.

Bikrami Calendar: Traditional Agriculture.

Many different forms of luni-solar calendars have been used in different areas marking the local festivals and seasonal cycles. These calendars have similar origins in the ancient astronomical knowledge of the Subcontinent. Therefore, a collectivist term as Hindu calendar has been used for its various forms. Due to its importance in Hinduism for religious activities and its firm importance in agricultural practices for Indians, the Government of India formalized the different eras and forms, mainly Bikrami and Saka, of this calendar to devise a uniform solar calendar throughout India in 1957 (Freed and Freed, 1964). Calendars in different regions mark significant eras that might be relevant to the history of that particular region (Kennedy et al, 1965). Most of these calendars mark the Hindu festivals and the later forms of such calendars may have undergone variations depending upon which religious or social group adopted any of the form of such calendars. For instance, the Sikh or Nanakshahi calendar, an altered form of the Bikrami calendar, was officially adopted in 1999. It marks the eras and calendric festivals linked with Sikhism (Purewal, 1999).

Bikrami calendar has been used in the Jhokwala village as in most of Pakistani Punjab for centuries (Mughal, 2008). The calendar has two components, lunar and solar. The synodic period or the time required for the moon to complete one series of its successive phases is known as the lunar month. Twelve such synodic periods of the moon compose one lunar year. A lunar month is roughly equal to 29.5 solar days. The moments of new or full moon have been used as the marking points of beginning or ending a lunar month due to the visibility of moon during these moments. The lunar component will be adjusted with the solar component through intercalation. *Saghraand* is the first day of each *desi* month. In other words, it is the time or day when sun enters into a new zodiacal sign within a lunar month. Bikrami calendar starts with the month of Chaitr which comes in the mid of March in Gregorian calendar. Each month is recognized by its peculiar weather conditions, movement of migratory birds and other such changes in the natural environment.

An interesting fact about this calendar is that people of Jhokwala do not recognize the formal name of Bikrami calendar. Instead, they describe the calendar as *desi maheenay* which means local or indigenous months. This calendar is primarily of Hindu origin, marks only the Hindu festivals, and was formalized by a Hindu king, Vikramaditya, in 56 BCE (Balfour, 1885: 502). Muslims use this calendar for agricultural purposes only because its solar component is very helpful in regulating the seasonal cycles. Muslims in Pakistan do not use the formalized Indian National Calendar, which is a solar calendar and marks the Hindu festivals only. The elderly people who were young before 1947 knew certain significant dates like Hindu festival of Diwali because they were in social contact with Hindus at that time. However, at the moment there are no Hindus living in this area.

The dates of Bikrami calendar are available in some national and local newspapers in Pakistan. Elderly un-educated persons can be found asking the educated youth to check the dates of a *desi* month in newspaper for them so that they could cross-check their own calculation.

Since the reason behind their query is mainly agricultural, they are never interested in the chronological year of this calendar. *Oluk*, exchange of goods with services at the end of a season, has been prevalent in Jhokwala till the last couple of decades. The so called serving professions like barbers and shoemakers are "rewarded" at the time of agricultural production for their services they delivered throughout the year to the agrarians.

Since agricultural production is linked with the time reckoning in terms of agricultural cycles so season has been an important aspect of rural economy. Seasons are therefore reckoned on the basis of agricultural cycles. For instance, the time of wheat harvesting is called *kanrrak* or wheat season and cotton-picking season is called *phutti* or cotton season. A pair of *desi* months is regarded as a season in proverbs associated with these *desi* months. For instance, Badra *bad bla wat wee* Sawan *hovay ha* 'Badra is a bad month, would that Sawan may have been continued.' Badra follows Sawan and both months are considered as part of the rainy season, but Badrah is disliked in this proverb because of unexpected timings of showers and cold during this month. Similarly, many folk and modern songs use these months in analogies that highlight features attributed culturally to these months. Like elsewhere in the non-Western societies (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1969: 490), the younger generations, especially school children, recognize the concepts of four seasons due to media and modern education.

Elderly people can easily calculate *desi* months and they learnt the knowledge of seasons and *desi* months from their elders. They believe that when there is no traditional style agriculture there is no need of counting *desi* months. But this does not mean that people from younger generations do not calculate the *desi* months at all. Many people can tell the exact name of the month though they were not sure about the date and use the expressions like "*…month would be ending"* or "*…month would be starting"*. This becomes tricky when they are asked to tell the name of the current month in the first or last couple of dates of that month as they can confuse the inception and ending of the months.

Islamic Hijra Calendar: Religious Rhythm.

The origin of this calendar marks the year during which the Islamic Prophet Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina in 621 C.E. (Guindi, 2008:115). Migration is called *hijrat* in Arabic, therefore this calendar is also called the Hijra calendar. This is a lunar calendar comprising of 354 days in common years and 355 days in the embolismic years divided into 12 lunar months. The lunar months drift 11-12 days earlier in every seasonal year and the seasonal relation repeats every 33 Islamic years (Richards, 1998: 231-235). Sindh and South Punjab are among the regions where Islam first came into the Subcontinent in the eighth century when this calendar was introduced.

Although it is not directly associated with agricultural production, the economic significance of ceremonies listed in this calendar makes it an important part of the socioeconomic set up. All the religious events like Eid, *Milad-un-Nabi* (Birth of Prophet) and fasting are regulated by this calendar. The economic significance of shrine festivals, especially in the agrarian communities, is a common phenomenon almost everywhere in Punjab (Lyon, 2004: 209-223). The *urs* (annual ceremony) at the shrine of Hazrat Pir in Jhokwala is celebrated soon after the wheat harvest usually in the summer. It is however kept in consideration that the corresponding Islamic month should be a suitable month for festivals. For instance, the timing of a ceremony can be shifted forward or backward if it coincides with the mourning month of Muharram, which commemorates the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson. The same rule applies to any other

events of happiness like marriages. Marriages are not performed in the fasting month of Ramadan as it is only a month of worship. Playing music and dancing, which are common at marriage ceremonies, are not considered appropriate during this month.

It is mandatory to sight the moon in order to mark the start of a month according to Islamic principles. This becomes critical when in the preceding month religiously significant event like Eid or fasting have occurred. Before the introduction of telecommunication and media, people had to rely on the local witnesses of moon sighting to celebrate any event. Therefore, it was quite possible that one town would have celebrated the event on one day while the other would celebrate on the next day depending upon when there had been enough witnesses of crescent sighting. Now, the government announces the sighting of crescent in any part of the country meaning that the whole country would celebrate the event on the same date.

The exact date according to this calendar may not be known to the people, unless there is any significant event during a month and people must remember the date for that purpose. Nearly all the people in the village however tell the name of the current month and the order of the months fairly accurately.

Gregorian Calendar: Modernity.

Gregorian calendar came into practice in the Subcontinent during the British period as early as the seventeenth century (Lawson, 1993). After 1947, Government of Pakistan adopted this calendar for civil purposes as part of the colonial legacy. Gregorian calendar, locally called as *angrezi maheenay* or English calendar is considered a Western symbol and is associated with modernity and urban life. Introduction of radio, television and mobile phones have increased its importance and use in the everyday life in Jhokwala.

People have increasingly tended to use this calendar and even after a single generation it replaced the Bikrami agricultural calendar, primarily due to a shift from agricultural economy to market economy. Gregorian calendar provided an alternative to the Bikrami calendar, whose knowledge was restricted to elders and people had issues in counting dates accurately as mentioned earlier. It is much easier to calculate dates in this calendar as it is only a solar calendar and has no issue of intercalating between solar and lunar components. Gregorian calendar also translated the seasonal context for December and January as the coldest months, coinciding with the *desi* month of Poh, and June as the hottest month, coinciding with the *desi* month of Haar. Knowledge about crop and other agricultural cycles, as mentioned before the government provides literature to the farmers in this calendar, is now very much linked with this calendar.

The only issue in the context of Gregorian Calendar in Pakistan has been the controvery over Sunday as a weekend (Esposito 1998:175). Sunday holiday has been officially adopted, but it has been replaced with Friday various times in Pakistan due to the demands from religious parties, Friday has a great religious significance in Islam. Sunday is officially practiced as a weekend in Pakistan, especially in government offices, private organizations, and urban markets. In rural areas like Jhokwala, the concept of Sunday as weekend is fully or partially absent.

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